Sixteen questions before you buy

Ask in writing, require plain-language answers, and treat vagueness as an answer. The bar throughout is the DfE's product safety standards for generative AI and its guidance on procuring edtech. Tick when the answer is in the contract, not the call.

1. Exactly what personal data does the tool collect or receive? (A finite list.)
2. Where is it processed and stored? (Named locations, in the contract.)
3. Is our data used to train, fine-tune, test or improve your models? (An unqualified no, or off by default with proof. The DfE says you must be able to tell us.)
4. How long is data kept, and what happens when we leave? (Days, not vibes; certified deletion on exit.)
5. Who are your subprocessors? (A published, current list with change notice.)
6. How and when do you notify us of a breach? (A contractual period measured in hours.)
7. How does the product keep children safe by design? (Specific, age-calibrated mechanisms.)
8. What filtering and moderation applies to what the AI generates? (Inside the product, described concretely.)
9. How was it tested against jailbreaking and misuse? (Testing described, results shareable.)
10. What have you done about over-reliance, emotional dependence and pupils' development? (The standards now ask; most have no answer yet.)
11. Are we controller and you processor, in a signed data processing agreement? (Yes, offered unprompted.)
12. Who owns prompts and outputs? (We do, and the contract says so. The standards are silent on this, so the contract must not be.)
13. How much notice do we get when the model or features change? (Contractual notice, not a changelog.)
14. What may you do with prompts, outputs, logs and usage data? (Exhaustive and narrow.)
15. What certifications and independent assessments can you show, and have you had a DPIA done on the product? (Recognised, current, independent.)
16. What happens to our data if you are acquired or shut down? (Exit and deletion survive the company.)

Outcome, recorded on the register entry: approved / approved with conditions / declined, with the telling answers attached.